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President: Mr. HADID (Algeria)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATOR FOR 1992 AND PROGRAMME-LEVEL ACTIVITIES (DP/1993/10 and Add.1-5)

1. Mr. DRAPER (Administrator), introducing the item, said that the current generation of world leaders had unparalleled opportunities to pursue global cooperation in a world in which the forces of democracy and economic liberalization had been unleashed, but in time of recession the risk was high that the pursuit of peace would be at the price of development. While peace-keeping budgets had risen more than sevenfold between 1991 and 1993, voluntary contributions to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Population Fund had declined by some 10 per cent between 1992 and 1993, and were in any case a small fraction of the $3.7 billion assigned to peace-keeping in 1993.

2. The values underlying the new global order could not be such as would tolerate the fact that 800 million people did not have enough to eat, that 1.3 billion people lived in absolute poverty, that 1 billion were illiterate, that two thirds of those illiterates were women, that 1,400 young children died every hour from malnutrition and disease, and that population levels were likely to have doubled by the time the young of today reached retirement age.

3. No humane world order worthy of international support could be based in the long term on force alone, and it had never been so critical for the United Nations to play a dynamic role in human and economic development. One could not claim to stand for peace, while turning one's back on human deprivation and the plundering of the natural environment. The price of prevention was always far less than that of remedial action.

4. UNDP was a wonderful and unique instrument for the pursuit of peace, democracy and development, which deserved strong support because of its established country presence, its focus on human development, its capacity-building role in the area of the environment, its leadership in the management of technical cooperation and its record of managerial efficiency.

5. UNDP was the only truly global network for general operational development at the disposal of the United Nations. Its multisectoral approach made it uniquely suited to address the many complex tasks that were increasingly falling within the domain of development. The success of such efforts as its recent support to countries holding multi-party elections, and its support for attempts to improve governance and/or to protect human rights depended in large measure on the trust that had been engendered at the country level, and on the logistical and management support which only UNDP could offer. UNDP had provided, or been asked to provide, electoral assistance to more than 30 countries; he paid particular tribute to the United Nations Volunteers in Cambodia who, in spite of extremely difficult circumstances, had helped to make the election in that country such a success. UNDP was working with the Centre for Human Rights on more than 50 projects, ranging from the creation of new constitutions in Lesotho and Zimbabwe to the establishment of a human rights commission in Honduras. The improvement of governance had become one of the three main thrusts of UNDP's regional programme in Latin America and the Caribbean, and in many other countries UNDP was supporting economic and public

administration reforms and working to improve financial management. UNDP's country presence was also critical for the effectiveness of United Nations programmes of humanitarian assistance; it would continue to be a reliable partner in providing operational and country-based support through the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. In all such areas it had to be recognized that a high profile by UNDP was often incompatible with sustainable results, although it was always a silent and strong partner in the field.

6. The second reason why UNDP deserved broad support, and could play a key role in the Agenda for Peace, was its focus on people. Its leadership in human development would continue to make significant contributions to the evolving consensus on the future shape and form of technical cooperation. The promotion of women, non-governmental organizations and the private sector in development were themes which had left their mark through countless country programmes.

7. Through the Human Development Report, which had received deserved attention both in developing countries and in donor capitals, UNDP had provided a vehicle for dialogue on the priorities that must underlie national development efforts and development cooperation. In recent years, human development had been a subject of debate in the parliaments of Italy, France, Sweden, Canada, Germany and the European Community, and, more importantly, had prompted action in developing countries. UNDP was now acting on requests from 28 countries for assistance in setting up national human development strategies and goals.

8. The third reason why UNDP was special and deserved strong support was that it had been designated at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to be the lead agency in organizing United Nations system-wide efforts towards capacity-building in the area of environment and development, had been given the mandate to help countries in their follow-up to the Conference by establishing and strengthening national coordination mechanisms and networks, and had been asked to help mobilize both internal and external resources for sustainable development. In all three of those tasks, it was UNDP's impact at the country level which would enable it to carry them out, for while most environmental problems had a global dimension, solutions were invariably to be found at the national level. The role UNDP had played in linking environment and development at the national level in preparations leading up to the Conference had been one of the reasons why it had received the Earth Prize in December 1992.

9. The fourth reason why UNDP was special was its key leadership role in the management of technical cooperation. The promotion of national execution, the successor support cost arrangements and the programme approach were closely interrelated and constituted a revolution in the way UNDP did business. The specialized agencies, with their breadth of experience and knowledge, would continue to remain indispensable partners. National execution had increased from just over 4 per cent of programme delivery in 1985 to more than 23 per cent in 1992. Almost 40 per cent of projects approved so far for the fifth cycle would be executed by developing country Governments. The trend was towards a more focused and effective multisectoral approach in support of national goals.

10. The fifth and final reason was that UNDP had made great progress in its own managerial efficiency, based on a pro-active human resources strategy, strict budget management and a decentralized approach which relied on managerial

(Mr. Draper)

initiative and accountability. A number of changes had been instituted in recent years, including a highly competitive programme to recruit and train young professionals to be the next generation of leaders in UNDP, management and other specialized training for all professional staff, a new performance appraisal system and reassignment policy which encouraged transparency and interaction between managers and staff, special professional counselling at headquarters for those with personal problems which affected their performance, and a new total quality programme, which was already yielding tangible results after only 18 months of operation.

11. In the interest of preserving funds for UNDP's programme, drastic measures had been taken to reduce administrative expenditure, with headquarters posts being cut by 15 per cent in the 1992-1993 budget and proposed cuts of some $42 million for the next biennium. The core budget for 1994-1995, which was being submitted to the Governing Council at its current session, was in fact lower than the original budget for 1992-1993 submitted in 1991. It was his belief that those cost-saving measures were without precedent in the United Nations system, and he was pleased to see that that had been recognized by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. Measures had also been taken to strengthen accountability, with the introduction in 1990 of the concept of the operations manager in the field, and two new proposals in the forthcoming budget aimed at further increasing cost-effectiveness and accountability, namely the creation of an Office of Budget and Management and the establishment of regional service centres.

12. He believed that in all those areas UNDP had earned the trust of the Governing Council. Its record at the country level should engender confidence and pride, although it was fallible and had made mistakes. It continued to face the dilemma that its strengths were not always immediately visible. It was difficult to support national capacity-building, with its emphasis on national commitment and ownership, and at the same time secure headlines which drew attention to its particular role. UNDP's great strength was its ability to respond to changing needs and priorities in developing countries, indeed to changing concepts of development itself. But that was seen by some as lack of direction or as lack of a clear sense of purpose. UNDP's mandate was broad-based and complex, and to some extent in constant evolution, but it was proud to be the trusted partner of 174 Governments.

13. He thanked all members of the Governing Council, and in particular the major donors, for their long-standing and continued strong support. UNDP remained fully committed to the reform initiatives currently under way, notably the Nordic initiative on governance and financing. It was absolutely essential that formal agreement be reached urgently on that entire reform package. A related question was that of the role of the resident coordinator, for the management of which system UNDP had been recognized by the General Assembly, in its resolution 47/119, as remaining the best vehicle. Strengthening that system was the most cost-effective option for Member States, and to that end UNDP was committed to following through on widening the selection pool. He had already made proposals in that connection to increase the transparency of the process, such as informing partners in the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP) of all resident representative vacancies, giving careful consideration to all candidates and reporting back, and to extending the UNDP Management Training

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Programme for new recruits into a joint entry level programme for all JCGP partners.

14. He would like to conclude his term of office with three parting thoughts. Firstly, UNDP must never lose the support it received from developing countries, which derived from its multinational composition, its global presence and the sense of ownership by developing countries that came from full participation in governance. To lose that support would be to risk UNDP's identity and perhaps its very reason for being. It was above all an instrument of global cooperation, and in everything it did it must seek common ground. UNDP must be ever wary of becoming blindly donor-driven, important though those donations of course were.

15. Secondly, UNDP must focus more on sub-Saharan Africa, which was in many respects falling behind the rest of the world. UNDP had and would maintain a special commitment to Africa, which received about half of its total core resources, but it had to be wary of applying set old formulas which in many instances had proved not to work. The challenge of Africa was primarily one of vision, and for that the Africans themselves had to set a new course. But in making that vision real, the world community must stand ready to help, and UNDP must lead the way.

16. Lastly, development was about people, and the desire to make their lives better. It was essential to remain vigilant against protectionist tendencies which stifled human initiative, whether resulting from the self-serving interests of national Governments or from the deadening inertia which was always a threat to international bureaucracies such as UNDP's.

17. Mankind had to ask itself what it was willing to risk in order to achieve the ideal inscribed in the United Nations Charter that peace, democracy and development were one, and what it risked if it allowed that ideal to slip away. As Governments faced important decisions on the future of multilateral development cooperation, the functions UNDP carried out, by necessity, must continue. The idealism and the system through which so much had been achieved could not be abandoned; efforts should be redoubled to improve and strengthen those elements of that system which appeared to work. Change must be sought, not for its own sake but in the genuine belief that improvements could be made.

18. After seven years as Administrator of UNDP, he remained convinced of its vitality, its ability to innovate and to evolve, and its enormous importance in facing the complex challenges that lay ahead. In taking his leave of UNDP at the current session of the Governing Council, he wished to thank everyone for the generosity they had shown in supporting him, and especially his staff, in whatever part of the world they served, for their dedication and hard work in making UNDP such a marvellous organization.

The meeting was suspended at 11 a.m. and resumed at 11.20 a.m.

SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ASSISTANCE (continued)

(c) ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE (continued) (DP/1993/19)

19. Mr. TENNE (Observer for Israel) said that the political repercussions in the Middle East resulting from the Gulf war and its aftermath had had an adverse impact on the Administered Territories, as elsewhere in the region. In order to offset the negative economic effects of that situation and the continuing intifadah violence, Israel had recently introduced a series of economic measures, which were outlined in document A/48/112. His Government's priorities for stimulating local enterprise through human resources development, increased employment and expanded infrastructures were in keeping with UNDP goals and were also consistent with the recommendations made in the report of the Mission for the review of UNDP's programme in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The Israeli authorities in Judea, Samaria and Gaza had found the report to be concise and highly professional and he commended the team and the UNDP representatives for their dedicated efforts.

20. Against that background, it was somewhat puzzling to note the reference made at the 12th meeting by the Director of the Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People in introducing document DP/1992/19 to the "absence of a host Government in the territories". In point of fact, the Government of Israel was the host Government and the operations of UNDP in the Territories were predicated on that incontrovertible fact.

21. Israel would continue its forward-looking strategy, as always in cooperation with UNDP projects in order to help the local population achieve the desired progress. The key to success in that common endeavour lay in resisting pressure to politicize the Programme's positive approach and in strengthening the fruitful working relationship between UNDP staff, experts and professionals and the competent Israeli authorities in the Administered Territories.

22. Mr. HORIGUCHI (Japan) said that his delegation attached great importance to the Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People and had actively supported it in view of the urgent need for such assistance and in order to promote peace in the region. His Government was considering making a contribution of $2.5 million in 1993 to the UNDP Japan-Palestine Development Fund, established in 1988 to promote the economic and social development of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and help create a peaceful environment in the region. In the light of those urgent humanitarian needs, the Government of Japan had pledged up to $3 million for emergency aid to the West Bank and Gaza Strip at the Tokyo Working Group Meeting on Environment on 24 May. He hoped that the projects supported by the Development Fund would be implemented speedily and effectively, with the cooperation of UNDP. Lastly, he stressed that the Programme should take a leading role in facilitating aid coordination, encouraging dialogue and facilitating the exchange of information among donors.

23. Mr. BORJA DE MONZOTA (France) said that the priority sectors for new projects had been well chosen and that everything depended on the content of the programmes proposed. It was urgently necessary to cope with the difficulties resulting from the closing of the occupied territories, which would reduce available financial resources for the population concerned, to deal with the financial crisis of the private Palestinian institutions that had assumed much of the work in the field of education and health and to set up a personnel

(Mr. Borja de Monzota, France)

training plan in view of the multiple programmes proposed and the need to coordinate them. In that connection, his delegation welcomed the Programme's laudable efforts to promote coordination and greater mutual understanding of the programmes financed by the donors.

24. Mr. GUO Xianzhi (China) noted with satisfaction that in 1992 the Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People had achieved a level of activity unmatched in its 12-year history. China appreciated the efforts made in the past two years by UNDP and all sides concerned and supported the provision of technical assistance to the Palestinian people. It was to be hoped that in the planning of assistance programmes and activities in the future there would be full consultation with all sides under the short-term assistance programmes to create employment opportunities for the Palestinian people and improve their living standards.

25. Ms. KIMBLE (United States of America) said that her delegation supported in particular the new priorities identified for the new activities outlined in document DP/1993/19 and also endorsed the recommendations resulting from the review of the Programme in 1992. Those recommendations should be incorporated into the new programming and operational initiatives under way. Her Government welcomed such initiatives, particularly those on behalf of Palestinian women, and the Programme's effective collaboration with non-governmental organizations.

26. Ms. WYRSCH (Observer for Switzerland) said that her delegation fully supported the Programme's activities and new priorities, particularly with regard to the environment and creation of productive employment. It was very useful to have UNDP as a participant in the Multilateral Negotiation Group and she hoped that it would continue to play a major role in that connection.

27. Mr. ROTHERMEL (Director, Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People, UNDP), replying to comments made by delegations, said that the length of the report in document DP/1993/19 was in keeping with the relevant guidelines laid down by the Governing Council. He expressed appreciation to those speakers who had drawn attention to the crucial importance of employment at the current time and the critical situation facing the population in the Gaza Strip.

(a) ROLE OF UNDP IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS NEW AGENDA FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICA IN THE 1990S (DP/1993/17)

28. Mrs. JOHNSON-SIRLEAF (Assistant Administrator, Regional Director for Africa), introducing the sub-item and the report of the Administrator (DP/1993/17), said that the expected peace dividend resulting from the end of the cold war had not materialized for Africa. To make matters worse, economic difficulties in some donor countries had led to drastic cuts or little or no growth in development assistance. Furthermore, as the competition for development assistance intensified, the very concept of development was expanding. Tremendous social, political and economic changes were taking place in most sub-Saharan African countries as a result of economic and political reforms. Economic reforms were necessary to consolidate gains in production and growth, ensure broader participation in economic activity and reduce population growth. While insufficient in itself, economic growth remained an essential condition for sustainable development.

(Mrs. Johnson-Sirleaf)

29. Experience showed that elements of economic reform, such as price and interest-rate liberalization, exchange-rate adjustment and civil service reforms, could also represent a source of instability with regard to the potential for private investment and entrepreneurship. Accordingly, even in the relatively more successful adjusting countries, private capital inflows had virtually dried up and private investment was slow in coming. There was a need therefore to ensure the continuation of the reform process by reducing the external debt burden and increasing resource flows.

30. The donor community must support the progress made by African countries towards achieving sustainable development. There must be a commitment by the African countries themselves to sustain the reform efforts, further mobilize their human and financial resources, improve resource allocation and utilization and increase political participation by the people. The international community, for its part, must provide sustained support for African development. The linkage between debt forgiveness and flows and the need for concerted action in both areas had become both an economic and a moral imperative.

31. There must be a greater effort to build the human and institutional capacities of Africa and set up adequate infrastructures to prepare Africa for global competition. It was gratifying to note that in the area of political reforms, significant progress had been made in such countries as Benin, Cape Verde, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Niger and Zambia. The need for improved governance in all aspects was today widely accepted in sub-Saharan Africa. UNDP had assisted more than 12 of the countries that had taken the first step towards political pluralism in effecting political transitions despite difficult situations and unanticipated results. In some countries, however, the demand for political change and respect for human rights had resulted in internal conflict and unrest, undermining normal UNDP programme activities. If unaddressed, those situations would require a much higher level of resources at a later stage. In addition to the structural problems of underdevelopment, there was the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which might well become the number one obstacle to growth. UNDP continued to increase assistance programmes to the countries that were affected.

32. In Africa, UNDP would increasingly be called upon to address the wider concept of development to help African countries set up programmes embracing such areas as economic growth, human development, governance, environmental protection and economic management capacity. The Programme, with its broad mandate, field presence and orientation, was the best institution to assist African countries and their partners in dealing with those issues. The Bureau for Africa itself would have to develop the requisite capacity to address those different situations and help countries elaborate long-term development strategies to take account of the broader development concepts.

33. In view of the increasingly differentiated development needs, UNDP would have to develop quick, pragmatic and flexible response interventions. The challenge of capacity-building was different and more urgent. Weaknesses in the institutional resource base of African countries remained largely unaddressed. Africa's big challenge was to use its trained human resources to develop sustainable institutions.

(Mrs. Johnson-Sirleaf)

34. Even more than before, UNDP would require the full support of all members to discharge those enlarged responsibilities. For African leaders, UNDP was an important alternative voice in the development of policy options, an institution for sharing the experiences of a vast field network system and a supportive partner for Africa's national ownership and empowerment. Nevertheless, there was a contradiction between the felt need for UNDP and its dwindling means to respond. Although appropriate adjustments were being made to take account of changed conditions, no institution could sustain the precipitous decline in resources under the current cycle without an adverse impact on the content and quality of its programme delivery.

35. With regard to UNDP responses to the development needs of Africa, new concepts had recently been introduced, such as the programme approach, national execution and new agency support costs. The emerging situation in Africa might require a revolutionary response: bold experimentation and responses to political transition which went beyond electoral assistance, quick responses to emergency situations, greater programme flexibility, holistic approaches to development, better delivery modalities and greater and more decentralized capacities.

36. In order to meet those new challenges, the Regional Bureau for Africa was seeking to enhance its own internal human and institutional capacity through skills upgrading, headquarters restructuring and the decentralization and strengthening of field offices. Specialized training was being offered to headquarters staff through workshops in such areas as poverty alleviation, resource mobilization, environment and sustainable development. The Bureau was also continuing to hold regular forums and policy discussions, in keeping with the objective of developing a niche for UNDP in the international intellectual dialogue.

37. Headquarters restructuring was being undertaken partly to improve the Bureau's internal capacity and partly in response to cuts in the administrative budget. While, overall, the headquarters staff had been reduced from 72 to 62, she believed that the structure and capacity for effective backstopping of field offices had been retained.

38. On the question of decentralization of field offices and strengthening of their capacity for policy dialogue, economic management and aid coordination, UNDP had accepted the recommendations made following a recent evaluation of the Economist programme launched by her predecessor in 1986. Consistent with those recommendations, the Regional Bureau wished to propose an increase in the number of Economist posts from the current level of 25 to 40. If the proposal was acceptable to the Council in principle, its budgetary implications would be presented at a later stage. The same training offered at headquarters would also be introduced at field offices, where appropriate. The Bureau was also taking steps to ensure that all financial rules and regulations were strictly observed, by encouraging regular interaction between division chiefs and programme managers at headquarters on the one hand and resident representatives on the other. Electronic communication facilities between field offices and headquarters were also being upgraded. The Bureau proposed to continue along those lines despite the cuts in its administrative budget, which would lead to the elimination of 50 international posts by the end of 1993. As far as

(Mrs. Johnson-Sirleaf)

possible, it would attempt to maintain capacity by replacing international staff with equally competent national staff.

39. The sharp fall in programme resources required an aggressive approach to resource mobilization. The decline in contributions had had an especially severe impact on the Bureau's regional programme, with grave implications for regional partners such as the Economic Commission for Africa. In response to that situation, the Bureau was eliminating low-impact programmes, ensuring greater programme concentration and resource mobilization and developing strategies that would attract additional resources from donor countries. Resident representatives were designing specific resource mobilization strategies at the country level and, together with recipient Governments, were expanding their contacts with donor representatives.

40. With regard to programme interventions, the overarching goal of UNDP in Africa was to help countries identify their long-term development goals and strategies and acquire the necessary capacity to achieve them.

41. At the level of strategy development, national policy and high-level capacity-building, UNDP-supported programmes, especially the National Long-Term Perspective Studies and the African capacity-building initiative, were particularly relevant. After initial teething problems, both of those programmes had become operational in late 1992.

42. In addition to its regional and national programmes, UNDP was supporting the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (NADAF) by serving on the panel of high-level personalities on African development which was advising the Secretary-General on the implementation of the New Agenda.

43. In the area of humanitarian assistance, UNDP was working with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in Angola, Liberia and Mozambique in delivering humanitarian assistance. During the drought in southern Africa, UNDP had successfully supported the 10 affected countries, thereby averting what might have been a tragic human situation.

44. Most UNDP activities were at the country level and some had been very successful. For example, through a programme to promote the creation and development of small- and medium-sized enterprises of high technological potential in Zimbabwe, Ghana and Nigeria, small-scale informal producers were now producing ceramics and other products on a commercial scale.

45. Within the parameters and constraints of UNDP personnel and administrative policies she was committed to full transparency and accountability and had informed all managers both at headquarters and in the field that no one who performed below acceptable standards or failed adequately to upgrade his or her skills would be shielded. In the changing situation in Africa, there were no panaceas or quick fixes. What was needed was a long-range framework and an increased capacity to respond effectively and rapidly to Africa's own efforts. She wished to conclude by expressing her appreciation to the outgoing Administrator, Mr. William H. Draper III, for the support which he had given to the Regional Bureau for Africa in particular and to the cause of African development in general.

46. Mr. MARKER (Observer for Denmark), speaking on behalf of the 12 member States of the European Community, said that during the discussion of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, agreement had been reached between African countries and their development partners that human development should be a central element of the strategy for the Agenda and that economic growth was a prerequisite for human development. It had also been pointed out that in order to make development sustainable, economic growth should give priority attention to human development.

47. UNDP was expected to play an active role in the implementation of the New Agenda and the Twelve therefore welcomed the Administrator's report which provided valuable information on the role of UNDP in advancing and implementing the Agenda.

48. Africa's development was primarily the responsibility of Africans. The fact that the international community had accepted the principle of shared responsibility and full partnership with Africa, and had accordingly committed itself to giving full and tangible support to the efforts of African countries, was equally important however. The international community should vigorously pursue its efforts to build that partnership and discharge its commitment.

49. The previous week, the ministers of development of the European Community (EC) had agreed on a special initiative for Africa which underscored the importance of establishing and maintaining stability and security in the countries concerned. The ministers had agreed to allocate approximately US$ 120 million for that purpose immediately, since they considered it of the utmost importance to move from emergency to rehabilitation assistance as early as possible in 1993, given the magnitude of the rehabilitation needs of many developing countries in sub-Saharan Africa. In that connection, the Commission of the European Communities had been asked to make an urgent evaluation of the resources needed and to design fast-track rehabilitation programmes. The ministers had also emphasized that such assistance should be coordinated fully with United Nations agencies and other donors and should be implemented, where appropriate, in close cooperation with non-governmental organizations.

50. UNDP could utilize its comparative advantages in several developing countries which were suffering from the consequences of man-made or natural disasters, by bridging the gap between emergency assistance on the one hand and rehabilitation and long-term sustainable development on the other. That was particularly true of the countries of sub-Saharan Africa. Towards that end, UNDP was strengthening the capacity of national administrations, institutions and local non-governmental organizations by promoting the African Capacity-Building Initiative, which was jointly sponsored by a number of donors. UNDP participation in building an enabling environment for sustainable development, by providing technical assistance for the different aspects of the democratization process was equally important. In that way, UNDP was building capacity in one of the most vital areas that facilitated sustainable human development.

51. The Twelve regarded partnership and shared responsibility as key elements in the implementation of the New Agenda. The initiative taken by the EC ministers of development was evidence of their commitment.

52. Mr. KPAKPO (Benin) said that the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s had yet to fulfil the expectations which it had aroused on the African continent. The targets set for 1992 had not been met owing to the failure of African Governments and the international community to take the necessary action. The activities of the Coordinator of Assistance to LDCs in the Regional Bureau for Africa in implementing the Agenda had been hampered by lack of human and material resources, with the result that most of the African countries had failed to achieve the minimum target of 6 per cent annual growth in GNP set in the Agenda.

53. While their countries were reeling from the effects of natural disasters and disease was ravaging their populations, African Governments had had to spend US$ 26 billion in 1992 on servicing a debt of over US$ 280 billion. Such a massive transfer of resources from South to North meant that neither Official Development Assistance nor net inflows of external resources to the African countries had increased in real terms for years.

54. The lack of commitment displayed by the donor community during the negotiations on the New Agenda seemed to have persisted, for no specific action seemed to have been taken, within the framework of bilateral cooperation, to implement the Agenda. In those circumstances, it was hardly surprising that more than half of all LDCs were in Africa. If nothing was done to halt the trend of declining commodity prices, virtually all the countries of Africa, would soon be LDCs.

55. He wished to thank UNDP and all the other agencies of the United Nations system for the efforts they were making on behalf of the African countries and the LDCs despite the magnitude of the problems they faced and the paucity of financial resources. He also welcomed the generous decision by the Government of Japan to organize a conference in October 1993 at Tokyo to examine, with the African countries, the United Nations system and other donors, more effective ways of rendering assistance to the countries of Africa. That decision was a hopeful sign and would encourage African countries to intensify their efforts to overcome their problems.

56. Benin had chosen the round-table approach for coordinating the activities of donors and of its Government. The second round-table conference had been held at Geneva in 1992 with the assistance of UNDP, and it had been decided to continue the process by holding six sectoral consultations during 1993. The preparation of the fifth country programme for Benin, which had just been adopted by the Council, had benefited from that process and from the sectoral consultations. For the implementation of that programme, Benin favoured the programme approach, since it facilitated the coherent, integrated execution of development projects.

57. In order to ensure the effectiveness of the programme approach, however, the implementation of the fifth country programme for Benin would require national technical and administrative capacity-building through personnel training and skills upgrading in the areas of project identification, follow-up and evaluation.

58. Technical cooperation played a decisive role in the economic and social development process of recipient countries. The Government of Benin was convinced of the value of such cooperation and had participated in the NATCAP

(Mr. Kpakpo, Benin)

process in order to gain a better understanding of the various components of technical cooperation. As part of the restructuring of its ministries, it had also decided to establish a programming and coordination unit, which would work directly with the NATCAP unit in the Ministry of Planning and Economic Restructuring.

59. His Government appreciated UNDP initiatives and actions aimed at national capacity-building in order to help countries become more self-reliant in all areas of development management and thereby achieve the objectives of the New Agenda for African Development in the 1990s. It also welcomed UNDP efforts to establish various mechanisms for economic management and aid coordination for LDCs and to help meet the targets set in the United Nations Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries, which he hoped donor countries would support more generously than they had in the past.

60. Mr. HORIGUCHI (Japan) said that one of the most important goals of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (NADAF) was the achievement of an average annual growth rate for real gross national product of at least 6 per cent during the decade. In his delegation's view, the most pressing task for African countries was to build up their capacity for implementing and managing macroeconomic policies. That was why his country supported the approach taken by UNDP in targeting the capacity-building efforts of African countries, under programmes such as the Management Development Programme (MDP) and the African Capacity-Building Initiative (ACBI). UNDP should play a catalytic and coordinating role in that area by working with donor countries, other United Nations agencies and multilateral institutions.

61. His Government, with the co-sponsorship of the United Nations and the Global Coalition for Africa and the assistance of UNDP, would convene the Tokyo Conference on African Development on 5 and 6 October 1993. The Conference was intended to confirm the importance of African development, enhance world-wide awareness of the need to assist African countries and discuss the basis for development cooperation in Africa.

62. Mr. BORJA DE MONZOTA (France) said that his delegation resolutely supported all the actions and programmes for Africa carried out by UNDP in partnership with African countries, as well as the priority given to Africa. France would ensure that such priority continued to be respected in terms of both the geographical distribution of UNDP programmes and the distribution of UNDP resources. In that regard, his delegation welcomed the convergence of approaches between UNDP and the United Nations Secretariat in the framework of the New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (NADAF) and reiterated its full adherence to the guidelines contained in the Agenda.

63. Mr. SJÖGREN (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, said that UNDP activities in Africa should be constructed around human development and should focus on national capacity-building. Human development activities were clearly an effective bridge between several interrelated aspects of development. Further development of its already considerable skills in the areas of human development and capacity-building would also help UNDP fulfil its coordinating role.

(Mr. Sjögren, Sweden)

64. The National Long-Term Perspective Studies (NLTPS) should contribute to the much-needed holistic, coordinated approach to development in the least developed countries (LDCs). Further efforts should be made to introduce NLTPS into more countries as soon as possible and the Secretariat could perhaps explain how it intended to increase the number of such studies. The Nordic countries would also appreciate more information from the Secretariat on the experience gained so far in the establishment of NLTPS.

65. The Nordic countries were concerned that the large number of regional economic integration projects being promoted by UNDP in the African region, in addition to regional programmes in general, would spread already scarce resources too thin for them to be effective. Tighter priorities needed to be set for activities in African LDCs for the remaining years of the fifth cycle.

66. The Nordic countries believed that UNDP had an important role to play under NADAF and had therefore decided to complement their considerable bilateral support to African countries with equally considerable support to UNDP. In order for UNDP to play its catalytic and coordinating role in Africa, its field offices needed to be strengthened, especially in the economic and environmental areas by integrating those aspects into all programmes. Lastly, UNDP must use the full potential of round tables, while also participating in other multilateral meetings on the economic and financial development of African countries.

67. Mr. MACHIN (United Kingdom) said that his delegation fully endorsed the market-oriented economic reform strategies being pursued in an increasing number of African countries. There was growing evidence that adherence to structural adjustment, in partnership with the donor community led by the World Bank and IMF, was leading to improved economic performance.

68. With respect to document DP/1993/17, it was important that developing countries' interest in regional cooperation should not distract them from reforming and liberalizing their economies. Unfortunately, regional integration could and did lead to inefficiency and uncompetitiveness, and developing countries which were growing rapidly tended to target world markets rather than primarily regional ones. His delegation welcomed the emphasis on investment promotion and private sector development, which could best be achieved by providing an enabling environment for the private sector. While his delegation strongly welcomed the commitment to the democratization process, it stressed the importance of governance with open political systems that gave primacy to the rule of law.

69. While food security was important, it was not synonymous with food self-sufficiency. The pursuance of food security beyond comparative advantage tended to divert resources away from more productive activities. UNDP needed to focus on ensuring access to food rather than merely increasing its supply.

70. Although his delegation agreed fully with the views of the Assistant Administrator and Regional Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa on the AIDS pandemic, it felt that UNDP work on HIV/AIDS in Africa should remain squarely within its areas of competence, in order to avoid continuing rivalry among United Nations agencies which could inhibit the international community's efforts in that area.

(Mr. Machin, United Kingdom)

71. He commended the structural and staffing changes in the Regional Bureau, which were consonant with the difficult decisions that the Administrator was taking throughout UNDP.

72. It was generally agreed that the delivery of technical assistance needed to be rethought in order to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. In that connection, his delegation was gratified that UNDP, the World Bank and bilateral donors would be meeting in early 1994 to re-examine the whole question of technical assistance delivery.

73. Ms. WYRSCH (Switzerland) said that UNDP was playing an increasingly fundamental role in Africa. One of its strengths was its solid partnership ties with African Governments which had led to the development of a long-term vision for African development and the establishment of structures which would allow such development to remain flexible and viable while permitting the effective participation of the entire population. The vision of the division of labour with international financial institutions was very interesting and it would be in everyone's interest if the current session could come up with a more effective division of labour. Her delegation supported the UNDP approach to the difficult problem of AIDS, which could seriously jeopardize all the progress made thus far in Africa.

74. Her delegation welcomed the novel idea of putting more UNDP economists in the field. It would like to know more about what such economists did and wondered whether a copy of the evaluation report could be made available to it. She agreed with the United Kingdom delegation that UNDP rationalize its work: the time had perhaps come to review all the tasks assigned to UNDP to see whether they were actually necessary.

75. Mr. GUO Xianzhi (China) said that despite the high price that African countries had paid in recent years for restructuring measures aimed at improving their development, they were still facing enormous difficulties in the area of economic and social development. His delegation was grateful to UNDP and the international community for the positive support they had given to the African region in connection with its economic and social development and the improvement of its environment.

76. Mr. JANHA (Gambia) said that it was disheartening to note that Africa's development was being very seriously affected by its ever-growing debt, which now amounted to 106 per cent of its gross domestic product. The situation had been further exacerbated by declining investment flows, dwindling earnings and imbalances in international trade. An appropriate strategy must be developed to ensure the coordinated, sustained development of Africa. In that connection, the role of UNDP in promoting the continent's development should be encouraged by increasing the quality and quantity of assistance to Africa and strengthening the Regional Bureau. Any decrease in UNDP development assistance to the region, especially at the current critical stage in its development, could adversely affect the sustainability of very useful programmes initiated by UNDP in such vital areas as capacity-building and poverty alleviation.

77. Mrs. VASISHT (India) said that her delegation supported all international efforts aimed at the development of Africa and saw the New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s as a vital component of programmes in that

(Mrs. Vasisht, India)

regard. However, it must be emphasized that the role envisaged for UNDP was one of promoting self-sufficiency in Africa. The African countries were bursting with talent that only needed a push in the right direction and temporary financial support to succeed. Africa had its own agenda for development and no collective outside international agenda should be imposed on the region.

78. Although her delegation had been absent during the discussion of the special programme of assistance to the Palestinian people, it wished to express full support for it.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.